

An Inaugural Dissertation

on

Dysentery

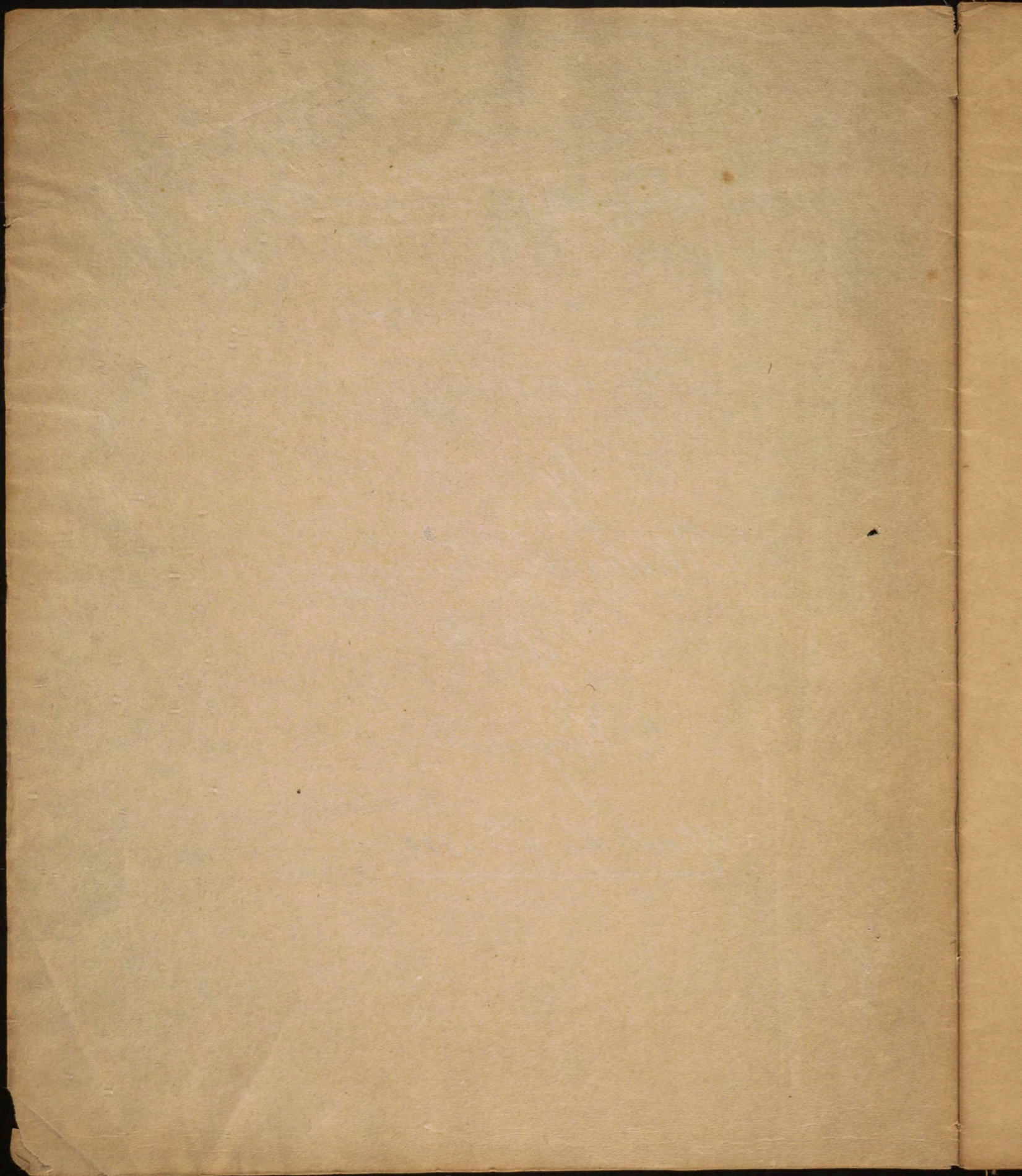
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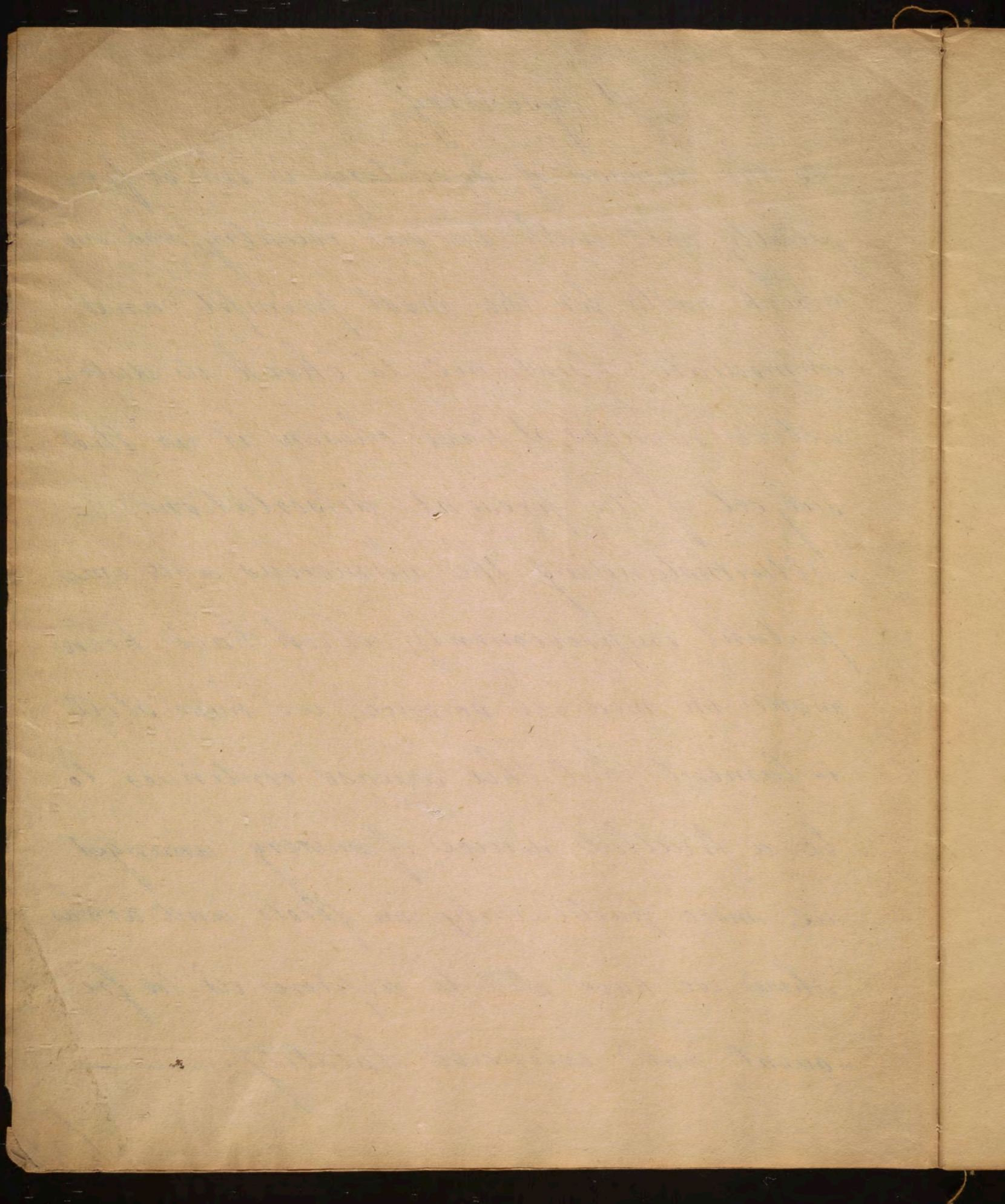
April the 5th 1811



Dysentery

As the disease of dysentery, is one, so frequently met with in our country, and one, which calls for the most prompt, and immediate assistance to check its destructive ravages; I have chosen it as the subject of the present dissertation.

Notwithstanding the numerous and important improvements, which have been made in medical science, we have still to lament that this disease continues to be a fruitful source of misery amongst us; more particularly in fleets and armies where we have still to deplore its too frequent and extensive fatality.



We consider the dysentery as an inflamm-
-atory disease, thrown in upon the bowels, or
as, I think, Doctor Rush very happily and
appropriately terms it, an intestinal sta-
-te of fever. It generally makes its appear-
-ance in those seasons, in which intermit-
-tent and remittent fevers are most preva-
-lant; viz, about the end of summer or
beginning of autumn, tho it is not confin-
-ed to any particular season. It commen-
-ces with chilliness and rigors, which are
soon succeeded by a hot fit, and other
symptoms of pyrexia. The premonitory
symptoms of this disease, are, a general
languor, and sense of lassitude, accom-

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-panica with a defect of appetite, and loath-
-ing of food, a bitter taste in the mouth, is not
-infrequently experienced, together with unea-
-siness in the upper bowels, nausea, frequent in-
-clination to vomit, with pain in the lower
-bowels. In this forming state, if something
-be not done to check its progress, the above
-symptoms are soon followed by an increased
-action in the arterial system, excessive pain
-in the head, great thirst, and sometimes a co-
-pious discharge of bilious matter from the
-intestines. The pulse which in the commence-
-ment, was feeble, and almost imperceptible,
-now becomes full and strong, and the patient
-is seized with troublesome griping and

tenesmus. — The above symptoms are not regularly and invariably attendant, for it sometimes attacks with a slight pain in the head, unaccompanied with any apparently febrile action, followed by tenesmus and frequent, tho small, discharges, consisting chiefly of mucus, sometimes of blood and mucus, intimately blended.

The dysentery sometimes occurs in the form of an intermittent, but more frequently in a remittent form, approaching to that of a continued fever, attended with highly inflammatory symptoms.

The evacuations from the bowels differ materially in their appearance, some

times they consist wholly of mucus, now &
then of pure blood, and in a majority
of cases, there is an intermixture of blood
and mucus. — Notwithstanding the frequent
discharges by stool, natural feces seldom
appear, and when they do occur, are
evacuated in small, round, indurated ma-
sses, termed by authors, scybala. —

Upon the expulsion of these, whether ef-
fected by the efforts of nature or solicit-
ed by art, the patient is commonly re-
lieved for a short time, from the trouble-
some and distressing griping and te-
nesmus. — But these remissions are trea-
cherous and of short duration, for it

is not long before all the symptoms recur with increased violence. The disease now daily gains strength, and if not attentively and skilfully managed soon terminates the existence of the unfortunate sufferer. The dysentery is the offspring of miasmata, according to Doctor Rush, and is invited to the bowels by those causes which debilitate them, as rapid aliment &c. A moist atmosphere in hot seasons and sudden transitions from heat to cold, by checking perspiration, and throwing it on an internal part, become causes of this disease, when thrown on the bowels, as they do of pulmonic in-

in the day before the appearance of
the sun. The sun was
seen many times during the day of the
eclipse and the light was very
faint. The temperature of the air was
very low. The wind was very light
and the sky was very clear. The
sun was visible for a few minutes
at the beginning and at the end of
the eclipse. The sun was very bright
and the light was very strong. The
temperature of the air was very high.
The wind was very strong. The sky
was very cloudy. The sun was not
visible. The temperature of the air was
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very low. The wind was very light.

-flammation, when thrown upon the lungs.

The predisposing or occasional cause of this disease, is debility, whether induced directly or indirectly. I will now enumerate some of the causes which act by inducing this debility. Under this head may be classed the passions of the mind as grief, fear &c. That these exert considerable debilitating effects, is well known from daily experience. Cold. That this is a powerful cause in producing debility, will be acknowledged on all hands, as when applied to the body, it universally produces languor and inactivity, and is well known to dimi-

-nish the force and frequency of the pulse.

A frequent, as well as truly lamentable cause of this, as of many other violent diseases, is, intemperance in the use of ardent spirits; these when taken in large quantities not only debilitate the whole frame, but render it extremely excitable, consequently susceptible to the whole train of diseases, to which the human body is subject. Great mental or corporeal fatigue, may be considered as a frequent cause of this disease. I will now say a few words with respect to the proximate cause; the opinion taught by Dr Cullen, is, that it consists in a

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rigidities when taken in large quantities
not only debilitates the whole system
renders it extremely susceptible of contagion
by communicating to the whole body
dangers to which the human body is
subject. Great mistakes are frequently
made, and the consequences are a frequent
cause of the disease. I will now say
a few words with respect to the force
made cause the chronic cough by
Dr. Williams that it causes in a

preternatural constriction of the colon, occasioning at the same time, those spasmodic efforts which are felt in severe griping, and which efforts propagated downwards to the rectum, occasion there, the frequent mucous stools and tenesmus. That a constriction does exist, I will not pretend to deny, but that the Doctor has mistaken the effect, for the cause, will, I am sure, appear evident, when we advert to the causes which act remotely in producing the disease. That the proximate cause consists in a morbid and irregular action, in the bloodvessels of the part, will appear clear to every can-

the first, will appear other to every one
irregular action, in the theosophical
more cause consists in a method
in producing the disease. That the
agent to the cause which act immediately
will of an agent, appears evident, when we
has manifested the effect, in the cause,
particular to show, that the
that a condition does exist, & will not
the frequent action, which are known
occasions to the action, occasion this
appears, and which effect propagates
more effect, which are felt in nature
commence at the same time, these
particularities consist in the order of

-did and unprejudiced mind. ~~~~~

Having described the causes, seat, and signs of this disease, in as clear a manner as my time will allow; I shall now proceed to its cure. Among the remedies enumerated for its removal; Bloodletting has very deservedly held a high rank, when the disease is recent, and the febrile symptoms do not run high; a gentle purgative will generally prove effectual in removing it. on the contrary when the pulse is full or tense, heat, thirst and other feverish ^{symptoms} considerable; it is sometimes extremely obstinate, and demands the most prompt and powerful remedies; among

which bloodletting most assuredly stands highest, this should be regulated by the state of the system, and urgency of the case. We should continue it ^{as} long as the tension in the pulse, and pain in the bowels, shall demand. A depressed pulse, which we sometimes meet with in this disease, as in many others of inflammatory action; so far from bidding us to withhold the lancet, calls more loudly for its use. Emetics are generally of little service, except when there is considerable nausea, depending upon a redundancy of bile; in this case the tartarised antimony and ipecacuanha may be used.

which fluctuating more often than
light, the whole is regulated by the
state of the system, and urgency of the
case. The whole contains it long as the
tension in the fibres and again in the
lungs, shall demand. A sufficient
which is sometimes met with in this
disease, as in many others of inflammation
is better so far from doing us to well
than the latest, calls more loudly for
it. In fact, it is generally of little
service, except when there is considerable
inflammation, requiring more a sedentary
of life in this case. The last course
may not be necessary, may be more

Purges have been very deservedly considered as an important remedy, they should be given early in the complaint, and repeated in some cases daily. They should be of the mildest kind, as the more drastic would be apt to debilitate the intestines, and thereby aggravate the disease. They act by diminishing the morbid excitement in the intestinal canal, and by removing all irritating matter, which we know to be a cause in the greater number of cases, of the tenesmus and griping. Altho purgatives should be given with an intention to evacuate copiously, yet we should be careful to avoid those which

Suppose there be a very small number
as in important cases they should be
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the number is apt to diminish the more
they may thereby aggravate the disease.
They act by diminishing the morbid
excitement in the intestinal canal, and
by removing all irritating matter which
we have to be aware in the great run
of cases of the disease and giving
the purgative should be given with as
little excitement as possible, and not
should be repeated to some than which

may prove too stimulating. For this reason
the neutral purging salts, have been much
used, such as, sulphate of soda, sulphate
of magnesia &c. As there is a necessity
for frequent repetitions of these medicines,
it is a matter of no small importance,
to render them as palatable as possible;
this may be effected by the addition of
a small portion of the crystals of tartar,
or lemon juice. Castor oil when good
and free from rancidity is a very excel-
-lent cathartic in dysentery, frequently
easing the griping, and procuring copi-
-ous discharges. - Many other purgatives
have been employed, as rhubarb, Salap &c

may have to stimulate. of the ocean
the most of passing with the human
and not a sufficient of any matter
of any matter. It is a necessity
for frequent repetition of this matter
it is a matter of no small importance
to know that as far as possible
the may be effected by the action of
a small portion of the subject of this
or some other. But as the subject
and the form of the subject is a very small
but collected in a very small
among the papers and becoming of
- in the subject - many other subjects
have been collected in the subject of this

but I think them far inferior to those a-
bove enumerated. — Demulcents have been
highly and deservedly extolled in this
disease; they should consist of flaxseed
tea, barley water, decoction or infusion of
the shavings of hartshorn &c. — Mucilaginous
substances should be taken by the mouth
and injected per anum. — After sufficient
depletion we should resort to opium,
which should be given in small doses
during the day, and large ones at night,
it has been also used with considerable
advantage in the form of enema. —

Blisters have been used with wonderful ad-
vantage, from the intimate connection be-

tween the skin and bowels, but we should be careful not to apply them before, by sufficient depletion, we have reduced the system to the blistering point; otherwise they will have either no effect, or prove of disservice. — They produce their beneficial effects by translating morbid excitement to the skin, thereby producing a solution of the disease. — When it puts on a remittent form, which is not unusual, we should have recourse to the bark, being cautious not to exhibit it before the system be sufficiently reduced, by previous depletion. — Finally when the above remedies prove unsuccessful

mercury should be used so as to induce
a ptyalism, the disease in the mouth
curing that in the bowels, by translat-
-ing it to a less vital part. ~~~~~

anywhere about the world as a man
of letters, the name of the man
who has in the land of letters
and is a life of letters.

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